WHIRRAKEE

July 2013

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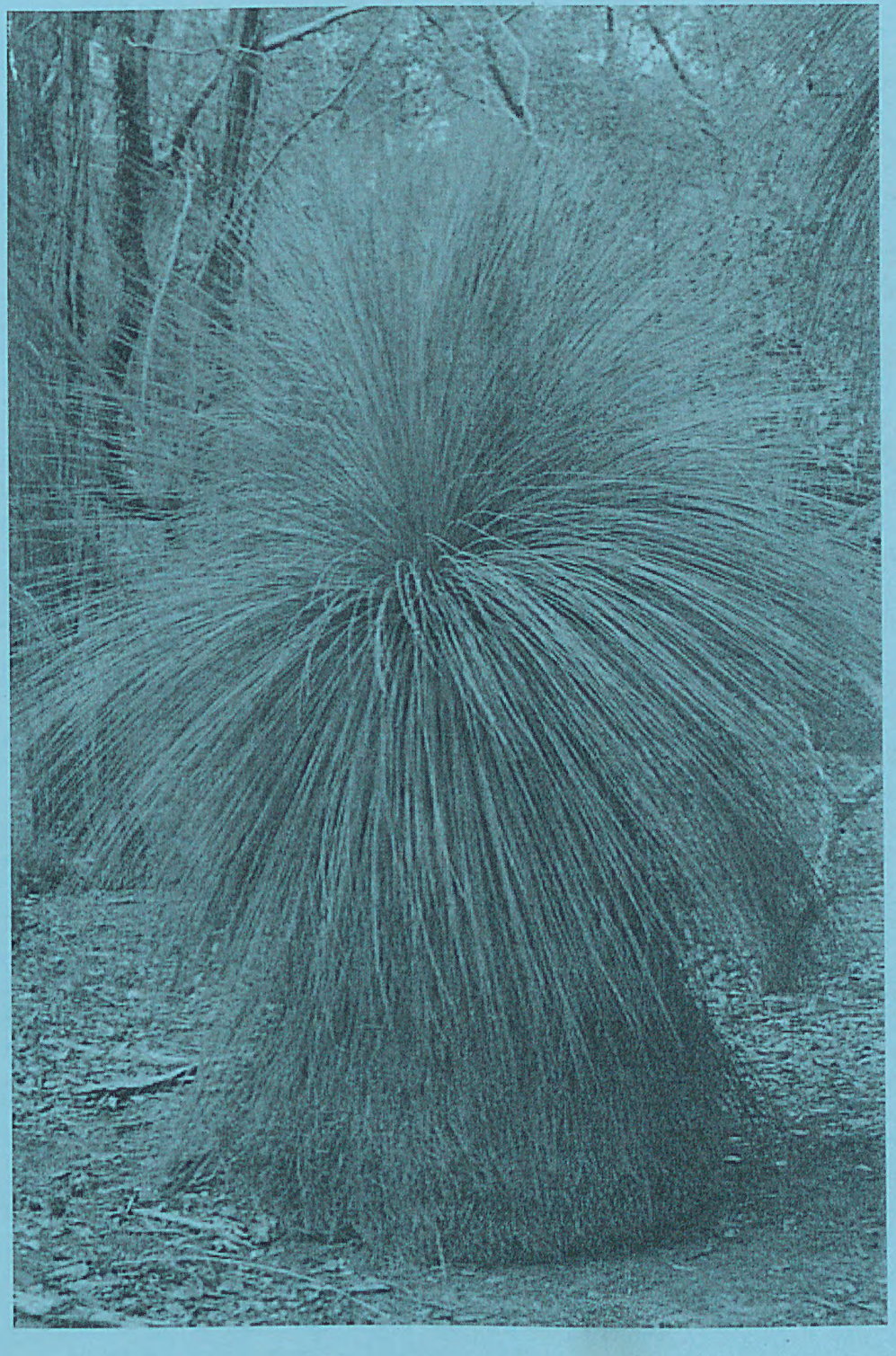

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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Office Bearers for 2012 - 2013

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Vice President	Richard Goonan	
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Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	John Lindner/Joy Clusker	5448 3406 (after 15/
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Co-editor	Gemma Candy	
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Vanessa Richardson	
Website coordinator/Webmaster	Ben Goonan	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 34, No. 6, July 2013
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note: In this edition, we deliver the remainder of the grass tree excursion photos and the report. By the way, two researchers (Drs Peter Curtis and Marc Bellette) are trying to get another, much rarer, grass tree species, Xanthorrhoea glauca subsp. angustifolia *(Grey Grass-tree) listed under the FFG Act. If you have experience with, or an interest in this species, you may want to support their submission. The period of public consultation closes on July 26. Please e-mail Marc Bellette at marc@ecologyconsultants.com.au if you are passionate about the conservation of this species. Recently, I saw* X. johnsonii *sold at a local nursery. These apparently grow much faster than our local species. Does anybody have any experience or comments about those?*
In September, we will have our Annual General Meeting, please think about nominating for a position or a job. Nomination forms will be included in the August Whirrakee.

Front page photographer: Joy Clusker

Another magnificent Austral Grass-tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis)* photographed at the Crosbie Nature Conservation Reserve excursion, 12th May (see report on page 8).

Short Notices

July Excursion – Sunday 14 July
Location: Boort area
Themes/subjects: Waterbirds and Aboriginal heritage: two special aspects of Boort

Leader: Paul Haw, noted local naturalist and author. Paul addressed the club in February, 2011, his subject then was the flooding of the Loddon River plain (there is a report of this talk in the March 2011 *Whirrakee*). He, and co-author Margaret Munro, had just released their book 'Footsteps on the Loddon Plains'.

Meeting: 8.30 am at the BFNC clubrooms in Old High Street, Golden Square
Returning: Probably 5.00 pm at the latest
Transport: We will pool cars as far as possible and passengers will be asked to contribute $10 each towards the cost of fuel other essential car running costs.
Travel: Via the Loddon Valley Highway (Eaglehawk, Serpentine, Bears Lagoon, Jarklin, Durham Ox), and then west (left) to Boort along the Durham Ox Road to the Caravan Park.
Facilities there; BP Service has Tea and Coffee etc. Distance one way is 102 km
Please bring: Warm clothing with beanie and gloves, waterproof/windproof coat, waterproof boots for wet conditions (though the roads are all sealed and the walking will be short), morning and afternoon tea, lunch, binoculars, lightweight seat, camera, bird field guide.

Itinerary:
9.30am /9.45am Meet in Boort Caravan Park.
9.30 - 9.45 Morning tea
We will see Lake Leaghur , and Lake Boort where birds are many. (We might decide to drive 4 km out of Boort to the Woolshed wetlands as this is particularly good for water birds eg. Snipe [though shy of crowds] and quail etc).
The great number of Scarred Trees (bark taken for canoes, rafts, carrying uses) in this one area, **has made it unique in the world**, and there are 37 identified cooking mounds.

Membership Fees for 2013 - 2014
The increased printing cost of producing a coloured section in the *Whirrakee* has meant that our current membership fees no longer cover our running costs. As a result, the committee has, reluctantly decided to raise the membership fees for the next BFNC financial year commencing on September first.
The new rates are as follows:

* Single membership	$40
* Family membership	$50
* Single concession	$35
* Family concession	$40
* Subscriptions	$40

The 'Students' membership category has been discontinued.

Fungi in the Wombat Forest – Excursion report by John Lindner

Location: Babbington Road just near Bullarto, Wombat Forest
Date: Sunday 16 June
Leaders: Rod Orr and Joy Clusker
Participants: Rob and Cynthia Watkins, Ray Wallace, Bill Holsworth, John Lindner, Kate Lindner, Jan Orr, Alistair White, Michael and Ros Barkla
Wheather: Fine but cold, alternately sunny and cloudy, light breeze. Translated, this means, a lot colder than Bendigo, but there was no rain.

Summary: After such a long dry period, we were wondering whether a fungi excursion would even be possible, but quite enough rain had fallen down south to dampen the forest and promote the growth of fungi for which this area is renowned. We only had time to explore two locations, one on the very southern slopes of Babbington Hill and the other just a short distance from the main road. Both these locations have proved rich in species on other occasions.
Habitat: It is useful to understand why this area is so suitable for fungi. The forest has many more trees compared to the woodlands around Bendigo. The tree canopies pretty much overlap so that the forest floor is kept shaded and damp. ...cont. pg 10

Excursion to Crosbie Nature Conservation Reserve 12th May (see report on page 8). Some photos form this excursion have already appeared in the June Whirrakee. Here are some others (all photos by Joy Clusker)

The party admiring the grass trees.

Golden Whistler, it was a great bird spot

There were many bones scattered around near a farm, mostly sheep ,but this one is probably a possum, any ideas?

Fungi excursion to the Wombat Forest (see page 9 for report). Photographer: Joy Clusker

Hypholoma sublateritum Brick Caps. I

Hypholoma fasciculare Sulphur Tuft

Ramaria ochraceosalmonicolour, Salmon Coral Fungus

…here are some more, illustrating the amazing colour range amongst our fungi!

Dermocybe splendida Red Skins

Dermocybe austroveneta Green Cortinar

Tremella fuciformis White Jelly

Beautiful birds at Crusoe Reservoir… Photographer: Simon Smith

Black-fronted Dotterel, 4th May 2013

Red-browed Finch, 11th May 2013

Red-capped Robin (male), 19th May 2013

May excursion to the Crosbie Nature Conservation Reserve (southern section)

by John Lindner

Date: Sunday 12 May 2013
Leaders: Anne Bridley & Kerrie Norris
Participants: Rob and Glenise Moors, John Lindner, Kate Lindner, Rod and Jan Orr, Joy Clusker, Kath Thomson, Matt Comer, Marian Hill, Elvyne Hogan, Jane Kelly, Pam Sheean, Laura Brookes.
Weather: At first quite warm, fine and breezy, but light rain was coming in as we left the forest at about 3.00 pm

Summary: We had 4 main stops, 2 of which were to investigate separate ecological vegetation classes (EVC), of which there are 4 in this area. We spent most of our time examining plants distinctive to each EVC, but also saw some interesting birds, mostly in the morning when conditions were more favourable. EVC is a rather jargonistic yet vague term, and it was a very nice feature of the day to find that, yes, each one is quite discernibly different in terms of structure and species composition, yet similar in some ways. Reference number 2 below is very useful in defining these differences and similarities.

Acknowledgement: Anne Bridley checked the plant and birds lists.

*Definition of EVC:*An ecological vegetation class comprises one or more floristic communities which exist under a common regime of ecological processes and which are linked to broad landscape features. The EVC names generally include the dominant structural form of the overstorey and understory (eg herb-rich woodland) and the landform on which the vegetation is found (eg. hillcrest). (See pages 9 – 10 from 2. below).

References

1. Ecological vegetation classes on public land, 1:350,000 scale map. This map clearly shows the location and extent of each of the 4 EVCs in the southern section of this forest.
From:
Box-Ironbark, Forests and woodlands investigation resources and issues report. Environment Conservation Council, 1997.
2. Description and conservation status of the vegetation of the box-ironbark ecosystem in Victoria
Muir A, Edwards S, Dickins M. *Flora and Fauna Technical Report No. 136.* Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 1995.

Report

Stop 1 Sheridan Road

This signposted road, three quarters of the distance towards Knowsley from Axedale, proceeds eastwards from the Northern Highway and is the main access road. Beside Yarrabee Creek grew a very large and stately specimen of River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), with a large dead section in the lower trunk which quite emphasized the tree's tenacity and longevity. Other notable and very attractive eucalypts along the creek and the roadside were Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*), Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*) and White Box (*E. albens*).

Stop 2 Junction of Handmer and Glad Tracks

We were given permission by our gentle leaders (after pleading!) to have morning tea before setting out to do the hard yards. There were 3 distinctive areas of woodland (EVCs) we investigated from here. After the first two, we had lunch before walking down the creek line to the third.

Box-Ironbark EVC as we walked along the track to the grasstree area

Eucalypts: Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*), Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*), Red Ironbark (*E. tricarpa*), Red Stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*), Red Box (*E. polyanthemos*). In the zone by the watercourse, a most beautiful area, it was notable that the trees were bigger and had denser canopies. On the return walk to the cars, I felt moved to give my 'Yellow Box sermon' – mercifully brief. This was intended to highlight the wonderful variability in the bark of Yellow Box - sometimes very dark, shaggy and persistent; sometimes broken up into thin vertical ribbons over a pale, smooth

surface beneath; sometimes with a distinctly orange tone in flaky or scaly bark. Examples of these could all be found nearby. The one thing that is consistent is the finely textured canopy of small leaves.
Understorey shrubs: Chinese Scrub (*Cassinia arcuata*), Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), Ausfeld's Wattle (*A. ausfeldii*).
This area, with its variety of eucalypts with dense canopies and quite thick shrub layer, provided the best bird-watching of the day. By comparison the next EVC, with few eucalypts, light canopy and shrub layers, was almost free of birds.

Honeyeaters: Fuscous, Yellow-faced, Brown-headed, White-eared, Black-chinned, Red Wattlebird
Birds of prey: Wedge-tailed Eagle, Little Eagle, Black Kite
Parrots: Eastern Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot
Others: Crested Shrike-tit, Golden Whistler, Welcome Swallow, White-winged Chough (small flock, a fine example of a large mud nest was seen), Yellow Robin, Weebill, Brown Treecreeper, Yellow Thornbill, Supert Fairy-wren, Striated Pardalote, Silvereye

Heathy Dry Forest EVC, on a slight rise which contained the mysterious and wonderful Grass-trees
Appearance: Due to the dry conditions, this area had many plants, which were clearly very stressed or had died.
Soil: The soil is slightly sandier and more gravelly than down in the lower ground.

Eucalypts: Red Box (*E. polyanthemos*) and Red Stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) were dominant, with a few Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*) and Red Ironbark (*E. tricarpa*).
Understorey shrubs: Daphne Heath (*Brachyloma daphnoides*), Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*), Gorse Bitter-pea (*Daviesia ulicifolia*), a species of Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia* sp.), Golden Wattle (*A. pycnantha*), Chinese Scrub (*Cassinia arcuata*), Rough Mint-bush (*Prostanthera denticulata*), Alpine Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina*), Twiggy Bush-pea (*Pultenaea largiflorens*).
Orchids: Tiny Greenhood (*Pterostylis parviflora*) – with flowers, Autumn Midge-orchid (*Genoplesium or Corunostylis sp. aff. nigricans*) – fruiting. Both these orchids are incredibly tiny. Also possibly the basal leaves of Waxlip Orchid (*Glossodia major*).

Austral Grass-tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*): These unique plants occupy a narrow band, a couple of hundred metres long, through the forest. They are quite tall (about 2 metres) mature plants, with dense skirts of dead leaves, which hang down below the green tuft of living leaves at the tops of the stems. This indicates that the forest has not been burned for a considerable time. Many of the skirts show evidence of animals having sheltered beneath them. Some of the plants have interesting double or divided trunks. Many of the plants have flowered some time recently as they bear the typical long flower stalks with many seeds. At several locations along the belt, young plants had germinated and successfully established.

Alluvial Terraces Herb-rich Woodland, just north of our lunch site and on the boundary with the cleared land
Soil: Here the silt from further up the creek had accumulated and presumably provides a more nutrient rich and moister environment.
Appearance: The combination of very large eucalypts, a light shrub layer and a very varied ground layer of small plants is rather unique. Two tiny red dots on the map are all the space that this EVC occupies in the southern Crosbie Forest.
Eucalypts: Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*), White Box (*E. albens*).
Herbaceous plants (mostly quite small): Sneezeweed (*Centipeda cunninghamii*), Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), Variable Plantain (*Plantago varia*), Stinking Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle laxiflora*), Clover Glycine (*Glycine latrobeana*), Chocolate Lily (*Arthropodium strictum*), Lesser Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*) - introduced and parasitic on other plants, Candles (*Stackhousia monogyna*), Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum bracteatum*), Bottle Daisy (*Solenogyne dominii*), Sheep's Burr (*Acaena echinata*).

Stop 3 Off Duncan Track
Hillcrest Herb-rich Woodland
Rocks and soil: This vegetation exists on a raised outcrop of fine-grained granite, which forms a series of small hills along a ridge.
Appearance: Here, more than anywhere else we had seen, were many dead and dying trees and shrubs, both on the hills and surrounding them like a ring. Granite-based soils dry out particularly harshly in the prevailing conditions.
Eucalypts: White Box (*E. albens*) saplings with large juvenile leaves.
Other trees: Drooping She-oak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*). These distinctive plants were dominant on the hill, but had obviously flowered and fruited quite prolifically judging by the numerous cones on the ground.
Understorey shrubs: Daphne Heath (*Brachyloma daphnoides*), Rough Wattle (*Acacia aspera*) – on the approach to the hill
Herbaceous plants: Rockfern (*Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*), Tall Raspwort (*Gonocarpus elatus*), Magenta Storksbill (*Pelargonium rodneyanum*) - some flowers were evident, Variable Sword-sedge (*Lepidosperma laterale*), Mat-rush (*Lomandra* sp.)

Birds observed between stops 3 and 4: Galah, Restless Flycatcher
Mammals seen during the day: Black Wallaby, Echidna (scratchings), Eastern Grey Kangaroo

Stop 4 Exit road to the main east-west road through the forest
Managed arboretum of Red Ironbarks (*E. sideroxylon*), owned by the City of Greater Bendigo.
The lines of trees had been thinned and trimmed to promote clean trunks.

...from page 3 Some of the major species of very big trees include Messmate Stringybark (*E. obliqua*), Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*) and Narrow-leaved Peppermint (*E.radiata*). The ground layer is generally very dense, providing shelter at ground level from drying winds and sunshine. Living components of this layer include Red-fruiting Sword-sedge (*Gahnia radula*), another large, clump-forming sedge, Wire Grass (*Tetrarrhena juncea*), Common Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) and Prickly Moses Wattle (*Acacia verticillata*). There are also masses of woody debris (tree trunks, branches, stumps) and bark and leaf litter. The fungi are found secreted away amongst this dense material, but also growing on dead wood and bark.
Editor's note: We ran out of room to publish the full list of fungi found. We will publish the full (or condensed) list in the next edition.

REFERENCES
McCann I. R., *Australian Fungi Illustrated*, Macdown, 2003 (about 420 species)
Fuhrer Bruce, *A Field Guide to Australian Fungi*, Bloomings, 2005 (about 500 species).

Victorian Nature Photography Group
We conduct three camps a year in locations which offer plenty of interest such as the Grampians, Bright/Mt Buffalo, Falls Creek, and the Great Ocean Road. Accommodation may include church or school camps, caravan parks or lodges; you can also bring your own caravan/camper trailer and stay in the nearest caravan park. We always self-cater to keep costs low, and so that we can be out with our cameras whenever the light is right.
Prospective members are invited to attend two camps before deciding whether to join, and we ask them to show us a sample of their images, whether beginners or experienced. We share ideas, learn from each other, and in the evenings view images, enjoy a guest speaker or discuss equipment.
The next meeting is at Halls Gap at the Baptist Camp, September 20-22; then camping at Lake Catani/Mt Buffalo in 2014 on Feb 20-24, and Apollo Bay (Star of the Sea Convent) May 9-11.

Up Close and Personal, an exhibition of Australian native birds and terrestrial orchids by Chris Cope. The Capitol, 50 View Street, Bendigo: 24th June till 2nd August.

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday July 10 **7.30pm**
Dr Matthew Symonds, Lecturer, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Deakin University: 'Tales of diversity among signallers and receivers: the evolution of insect pheromones and antennae'

Excursion –
See page 3 for full details of Boort excursion on the 14th of July

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.
It may be that these excursions are coming to an end. Make sure you ring Maurie if you'd like to go on such an excursion.

Family Nature Club
Sunday 21st July. Mt. Alexander Oak forest, charcoal drawing and fungi. Materials: charcoal, paper, clip boards. BYO lunch, coats, boots, umbrellas etc.
Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
Check out their 2011 and 2012 activities at http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall. Next meeting: 16th of July

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Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Regent Honeyeater weekend excursion and work party
Date: Friday 23 (evening) and weekend 24-25 August
Description: Tree planting with Regent Honeyeater Project, Benalla
Rating: Easy, and sometimes just plain hard work
Comment: Work, information sessions, meals
Organiser/Contact: John Lindner, 5448 3406

This long-term *Regent Honeyeater project at Benalla* involves restoring habitat for native fauna, particularly the endangered honeyeater, which once used to frequent Bendigo. We plant indigenous species of trees, shrubs and herbs in well-prepared area, and are informed about the many aspects of the project (eg. nest boxes for arboreal animals, regular bird surveys). Organisation is meticulous. You work pretty hard and go home feeling exhilarated.
What is provided: accommodation in the Guide Hall (mattresses on the floor), Saturday dinner at the TAFE restaurant, Sunday barbeque lunch, hot drinks for morning and afternoon tea.
You need to bring: 2 breakfasts, Saturday lunch, pillows and sleeping bag, old outdoor gear and boots and gloves for the planting work, good clothes for Saturday night dinner, towel, raincoat and beanie.

Please let John Lindner know a week before so he can book you in for the catering. John has transport in the ute for 2 other people.

Don't forget...the AGM is in September. Please consider nominating for something, anything! Forms will be included next month